others, prior to the publication of the Committee's Report. I saw in it no inducement to change them, and I have not found that the most competent judges have adopted the changes of nomenclature therein recommended. For instance, I am blamed for using the word *Coraciadæ* instead of *Coraciidæ*; yet I perceive that the President of the Linnæan Society, in the title of a very valuable memoir in the last published part of the "Transactions" of that learned body, does not hesitate to employ the similar term *Leucosiadæ* in preference to *Leucosiidæ*, as directed in the Committee's Report.

The reviewer's suggestion of "a Catalogue of the unabbreviated names of the authors of the different genera, and of the chief works in which they have published them," is one that has not escaped my attention. I have in my possession an extensive list of authors, accompanied with references to their works; but it is not my intention to publish it at present, although I may find occasion to do so hereafter.

In relation to the names of genera proposed by Dr. Schiff (to which the reviewer might have added the names of Dr. Reichenbach and others), I held it to be my duty to give all the generic and subgeneric names that came within my knowledge, whether accompanied by the statement of the typical species or not. I have fortunately been enabled in most cases (with the exception of the names of Rafinesque) to supply this deficiency; and I hope that I may thus have been the means of preventing, to a certain extent, the multiplication of names for the same divisions, although I do not attempt, as it would be useless, to set limits to the subdivision of genera. The addition of the name of the publisher, as well as of the author, would have involved the total reconstruction of my book on a different plan.

This article is longer than I had intended, but I must be permitted to end it with the words of a well-known ornithologist:—"We have chosen our path:—not having fallen into it by blind chance or wayward prejudice; but having selected it from all that lay before us, with free and deliberate preference. And in full confidence, as far at least as human reason and foresight can inspire us with confidence, of having chosen the right way, we shall steadily pursue it."

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES.

A Popular History of Palms and their Allies. By Berthold Seemann, Ph.D. &c. London: Reeve. 1856.

In introducing his subject to the reader Dr. Seemann states, that his attention was first directed to the family of Palms through inquiries set on foot in his school days, in connexion with the conversion of his pedagogue's cane into succedanea for cigars. We cannot lay claim to the possession of so inquiring a spirit in our youth, or at all events it did not take that direction. The associations connected with the name of palm-trees in our minds, and we fancy in those of most persons, are of a more elevated and less practical nature. To

us they have a mingled character of strangeness and a sort of classical grandeur. The frequent mention of palms in the Bible, the marked attraction they have exerted on all travellers, and the unusual and peculiar forms revealed in the scanty and imperfect pictures which until of late years were alone accessible, combined to invest them with a peculiar, and in some degree mysterious interest.

Until recently, the means which general readers had of forming an idea of palms were scanty enough. The conventional date-palm of oriental landscapes, repeated from copyist to copyist, and not at the first-hand very much like the original; the stock-group of cocoa-nut palms in every tropical sketch,—these formed the type upon which most readers built their conceptions of palms; and, familiar enough to travellers, they were only superficially known to any but professed botanists. Even botanists do not date very far back their knowledge of this family. Humboldt remarks, in his 'Ansichten der Natur,' that only fifteen species were known at the time of Linnæus's death. Martius's great work on palms; the labours of our indefatigable Indian botanists,—that worthy band of naturalists who have turned to such good account the rich opportunities opened in the East India Company's service; the travels of Humboldt and Bonpland, and more recently of Wallace and others in America: have wonderfully extended our knowledge of this family; to which public attention is continually drawn more strongly by the wonderful variety and abundance of their œconomic products. Cocoa-nuts, as articles of commerce, are now rivalled by their husk, or coir: palm-oil is not what it was twenty years ago, a *salve*, having a questionable preference in the eyes of old-fashioned domestic "leeches,"—but the source of "enlightenment" for thousands,—not merely actually, but figuratively, since the civilizing influence of the commerce in this article appears to bid fair to lay the foundation of the taming of the wild slaving nations of Africa.

It would be difficult to name any vegetable material used in the arts, or as a staple of food, which is not furnished by one or other of the palms. Timber; fibrous substances, coarse and fine, capable of conversion into cordage, clothing, &c.; nuts, hard and enduring enough to serve as vessels for liquids, or to furnish substitutes for bone or ivory; starch, sugar, spirit, vinegar, succulent green vegetable food, oils of various characters, wax, sweet fruits, nuts—all these are yielded, sometimes several even by the same tree. Hence the family is of the highest direct importance to the natives of the tropics, to which regions it especially belongs, while commerce renders it indirectly important, by converting it into a *property* for them, since they can barter the raw products for the industrial products of civilized nations.

Mr. Wallace's interesting little work on the Palms of the Amazon furnished a new set of ideas to the general reader, and Dr. Seemann's 'Popular History of Palms' is exceedingly well calculated to satisfy the curiosity which Mr. Wallace's readers must have felt to know more of these interesting plants. It is especially full in the matter of the œconomical products; in fact, this is the strong point of the book,

but the descriptions are interesting and often spirited. The amount of facts collected from various sources, and the practical acquaintance with the plants possessed by the author, concur to render this little volume very acceptable to the scientific botanist as well as the general reader. Twenty plates, illustrative of the most striking forms, are given; the drawing of them is tolerable; but we must exclaim against the abuse of the art of chromolithography exhibited in the blue and dingy-yellow tinting. This, however, is a small matter. We might suggest to the author, as he claims a scientific value for the substance of his work, to add to a second edition a systematic table of contents, and, if possible, a synopsis of the genera.

Museum of Economic Botany, or a Popular Guide to the Museum of the Royal Gardens of Kew. By Sir W. J. Hooker, Director. Longman & Co. 1855.

In most departments of human activity, practice at the outset far outstrips Science, who, advancing cautiously, rule and measure in hand, carefully surveys each step of ground over which she asserts her mastery. It is long before she thus reduces under law and order the extensive tracts discovered in the arbitrary *forays* of practice into the region of the unknown; but a time comes when practice does not find it so easy to descend into "pastures new," and when increased difficulties of existence render it no longer profitable to waste strength in tentative excursions. Then Science assumes her native pre-eminence, and becomes the leader and law-giver.

This truth obtains in the science which deals with vegetables, or at least is beginning to become manifest. Advice and instruction are now sought from the botanist when new materials are required for textile fabrics, for paper, for supplying oleaginous substances, &c.; and this demand upon the scientific man is one that must necessarily increase.

The vegetable substances indigenous, or commonly cultivated in the countries inhabited by civilized nations, have long formed but a portion of those used for purposes of manufacture or as articles of luxury. We find many products mentioned in the Greek and Roman writers as obtained from the "East," the real nature and sources of which were unknown, and enveloped in mysterious or fantastic fables. In the middle ages, and more especially after the discovery of the New World and the Cape passage, these substances multiplied rapidly in commerce. When botanical travellers at length began to carry scientific curiosity into distant regions, some progress was soon made in the discovery of the sources of the gums, woods, fibres, and similar materials, which, though well known to the dry-salter or the cabinet-maker, were stumbling-blocks to the botanist. The formation of museums was another important step to the regularization and accumulation of knowledge thus acquired; but it can hardly be said that this department of the science had been the object of a worthy systematic pursuit until of late years.

The formation of the Museum of Economic Botany in the un-